THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • MAY 07, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 32 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

UGC TELLS UNIVERSITIES TO DROP OFFLINE EXAMS FOR MAY

It has also asked the institutions to hold exams online after assessing the local situation to ensure the safety of students

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL TO HOLD ONLINE EXAM

Online exams would be allowed only if universities ensure they are prepared in all respects and adhere to the directions and guidelines issued by the Centre, states, the education ministry and the UGC. Earlier, the education ministry had directed all Centrally-funded institutions not to conduct offline exams in May. The decision will be reviewed again in the first week of June

RELOOK AT DECISION IN JUNE FIRST WEEK

- The UGC's advisory is binding on all universities that come under its purview, including the state-run and private universities
- The idea behind the circular is to avoid physical gatherings at the campuses and provide relief to students, faculty and the staff
- The universities can revisit the curbs next month, it added

620

UNIVERSITIES AND THOUSANDS OF AFFILIATED COLLEGES TO TOE THE LINE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

SC push for universal vax policy, oxygen buffer stock

Asks Centre to start preparing for third wave that will affect kids

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to start preparing for the third wave of Covid-19, advising it to create a buffer stock of medical oxygen to prevent panic and prepare a comprehensive vaccination policy for all.

During its hearing on the supply of oxygen to Delhi, a bench of justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said: "You (Centre) need to look at the issue of oxygen supply on a pan-India basis. There is a need to look at oxygen audit and also reassess the basis for oxygen reallocation."

It pointed out that the third surge, according to experts, will affect children. When a child goes to hospital, the mother and father will also have to go. "That is why vaccination will have to be over for this group of people. We need to plan for this in a scientific way," it said.

"If you (Centre) make an error in policy framing, then you will be held accountable for it," it said. The bench accepted the suggestion to form a committee of experts for oxygen audit.

"Today we have 1.5 lakh doctors who have finished medical course but waiting for NEET exam. How do you tap them? There is fatigue amongst the healthcare professionals. We have to create spaces for the existing body of health professionals. They are at the end of their tether," the court said.

Centre goes to top court over K'taka HC O_2 order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Centre on Thursday moved the Supreme Court challenging the May 5 order of the Karnataka High Court order directing it to immediately increase the allocation of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to the state to 1,200 metric tons (MT) per day amid the second wave of Covid-19. Making an urgent mention, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and MR Shah about the appeal. However, the bench stated that it will peruse the case files and order the Registry to list the matter thereafter.

The Centre, in its appeal, submitted that the High Court failed to consider the rationale behind allocation of certain quantities of oxygen to each State. "Purely on the basis of purported shortage in Bengaluru, the high court passed directions which, if fulfilled, will have a cascading effect and result in the total collapse of the system in its fight against the ongoing second wave of Covid-19 Coronavirus," the Centre said in its appeal.

The plea stated that the High Court order will ultimately lead to mismanagement of resources and create a further chaotic environment in an already overburdened system.

The Centre further submitted that issues which transcend the boundaries of the particular state, especially issues which require any special treatment to a particular state "which will be at the expense of other states, will necessarily have to be examined by the Supreme Court as it essentially requires a comprehensive national approach."

NATIONWIDE	MAY 5	MAY 6
Fresh cases	3,82,315	4,12,262
Recoveries	3,38,439	3,29,113
Deaths	3,780	3,980

STATEWIDE	MAY 5	MAY 6
Fresh cases	50,112	49,058
Recoveries	26,841	18,943
Deaths	26,841	328

JAB-O-METER TAKE YOUR SHOT

May 5: 18,90,346 doses

May 6: 22,98,530 doses

TOTAL: 16,48,76,248

3 DAYS HC DIRECTIVE TO CENTRE

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday directed the Union Government to consider within three days the requisition submitted by the state for supply of required quantity of vaccines for Karnataka. A bench said, "We may note here that there is hardly any scope for administering the first dose of vaccine in the state. We hope that theCentre will consider this critical situation."

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE
32 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

THE WAIT AND THE AGONY

A man dozing off while waiting to get an oxygen cylinder refilled at Rajasthan's Ajmer on Thursday; a distraught man talking over phone to inform his family about the death of a loved one in Ajmer; and a man in PPE after lighting the funeral pyre of a deceased relative in Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan Cremation Ground | PTI

KARNATAKA SECOND WAVE

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar says the 'close down' has not been as effective as anticipated, and suggests that additional restrictions should be considered

K'taka has increased the rates of Covid treatment in private hospitals for govt-referred Covid patients. The quantum of increase will be borne by the govt

15 cases

have been registered over selling Remdesivir in the black market

DISASTER AVERTED AFTER O_2 SCARE AT B'LURU HOSPITAL

Bengaluru: A possible repeat of the Chamarajanagar tragedy was averted in the nick of time in Bengaluru past midnight on Thursday. After getting an SOS from KC General Hospital in Malleswaram, that their scheduled oxygen supply was delayed, Dy CM Dr C N Ashwath Narayan approached a manufacturer and arranged an oxygen tanker | P4

Cautious optimism as US OK with waiver of vaccine patent

WTO negotiations on the subject are expected to begin next month. Tai warned that it would take time to reach a global consensus to waive protections under WTO rules.

At least 100 of the WTO's 164 nations are in favour of waiver, saying it would increase global vaccine production, but drugs manufacturers argue otherwise

Pharma lobby opposing the waiver says patents are not the primary obstacle, describes waiver as handing out a recipe without sharing the method or the ingredients, which could lead to quality issues

The alternative, they say, is the UK and the EU's system of licensing, as know-how is shared and there is oversight, like in the case of Serum Institute of India that is producing the AstraZeneca jab

Serum Institute of India has signed pacts with AstraZeneca and Novavax while Biological E has entered into an agreement with Johnson & Johnson for its Covid-19 vaccine

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

AFTER months of wavering, the US administration on Thursday announced its support to the temporary waiver of intellectual property protection on Covid-19 vaccines, a decision that could help Indian pharma majors produce foreign jabs at low cost, though experts were a tad wary.

The idea of a waiver under the World Trade Organization (WTO) forum was first proposed by India and South Africa in October last year.

Prodded by Democrat lawmakers, US President Joe Biden supported the waiver, reversing his country's earlier position on the matter. His remarks were followed by a statement from his top trade negotiator, Katherine Tai, who said: "This is a global health crisis, and the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures."

Experts in India, which has been struggling with supply side shortage of vaccines, welcomed the US decision, but advised caution. "To my understanding, it is a laudable step and will help countries like India in procuring higher doses of vaccines at lower costs if the WTO agrees to the proposal and vaccine makers transfer their formula to local companies," said Manisha Gupta, an intellectual property rights (IPR) expert.

She, however, flagged the challenge of managing quality. "Countries like India will have to ensure that only companies that are capable of maintaining quality get the license to make generic versions of the vaccines," she added.

Others like IPR lawyer Deepshikha Malhotra stressed that the advantage could depend on the pacts between the patent holders and local license seekers. Also, companies that get the license through the international agreements may have to fulfil all the regulatory requirements, as is the case now, she said.

Former Union health secretary Sujatha K Rao welcomed the development saying it brings hope for a much-needed vaccine equity to low- and middle-income nations. "In days to come, it is likely to enable vaccine production at very affordable prices helping governments provide it free to all and the price will no longer be a barrier to access," she said.

A few trade experts, however, pointed out that most Indian vaccine firms seem happy to work through exclusive pacts and do not favour free technology transfers.

DESPERATE TIMES

Family members of a Covid patient bring her to the Vidhana Soudha to stage a protest after failing to get a bed at a government hospital even after a long wait, in Bengaluru on Thursday | EXPRESS P3

Quarantine mandatory for Central teams visiting Bengal, says Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

THE tense relations between the BJP-led Centre and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reached another flashpoint on Thursday with the latter saying all visitors must produce a Covid-negative test report and stay in 14-day quarantine at their own cost. In other words, she sought to shoo off visiting Central teams.

Responding to allegations that a Union minister's vehicle was attacked in West Midnapore district, Mamata charged that he had come to stir up communal discord.

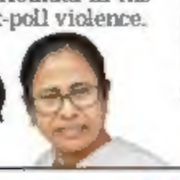
Alleging that Union minister V Murlidharan's visit was aimed at instigating BJP supporters, Mamata said: "Their continuous visits in the past six months have resulted in a record spike in infections. Now that all political meetings and rallies have been banned in the state, why are they still coming here? They want to instigate their supporters."

Stating that controlling the second wave was the priority, she said: "All visitors, including Union ministers, have to produce negative RT-PCR test report to enter the state. Rule is same for all. Even for me. If anyone comes in a special flight, they too will have to either produce a negative report or get the test done. If the report is negative, they will have to undergo 14-day quarantine at their own cost," she said.

Earlier, a Home ministry team landed in Kolkata in the wake of the post-poll violence.

I would ask the BJP to show restraint and accept the mandate of the people of West Bengal

Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal Chief Minister

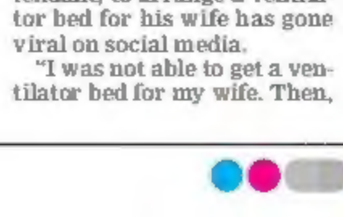


DENIAL OF QUOTA BEHIND BED BOOKING 'EXPOSE'?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

SHEER vengeance on the part of BJP leaders over being denied quotas in beds for respective politicians appears to be behind the 'expose' of the alleged bed allocation scam, claimed to have been unearthed by Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya and MLA Satish Reddy.

Top officials in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and the Covid-19 war room did not deny the possibility of illegal practices in bed allocation, which is being probed. But they informed "The New Indian Express' on condition of anonymity, the shocking details leading to the unearthing of the alleged scam and the communal twist it has taken. This included an incident that acted as a trigger wherein a patient from the majority community did not get a bed, which was instead given to one from the minority community who was in a critical state, reportedly by an operator also belonging to the latter community. Besides, the officials TNIE spoke to have complained about unwanted interference from the politicians in the functioning of the war room by visiting the place and reportedly even insisting on partly running the bed allocation process on the pretext of making it more efficient.



The issue allegedly has roots in the politicians — especially from Bengaluru South and Bommanahalli — approaching the war rooms and their nodal officers, demanding that a quota of 5-10 beds be created every day as part of MP/MLA/minister's quota (depending on their political position). P7

Cong demands BJP leaders' arrest for communal twist

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

TWO days after BJP leaders claimed to have exposed a bed-blocking scam in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) war room, the party leaders have been accused of being involved in irregularities and obstructing the war room operations. The Opposition Congress on Thursday mounted an attack on the ruling party leaders and demanded the arrest of BJP leaders, including Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya, MLA Satish Reddy and others.

"Take action against the BJP leaders involved in blocking beds and also arrest the party MP, who is trying to communalise the issue by targeting people from one community," Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president D K Shivakumar demanded Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa.

CONTINUED ON: P3

AUDIO GOES VIRAL

Couldn't get ventilator bed for wife, says helpless health officer

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

AT a time when thousands are scrambling to find beds and save the lives of their family members, the magnitude of the crisis can be gauged from the fact that even those in positions of authority seem helpless, even when it comes to their own family members.

An audio clip of Mysuru District Health Officer (DHO) T Amarnath, pleading his inability to arrange a bed for a patient, has called into question the system of bed management in the district. The health officer pouring out his struggle, with the patient's attendant, to arrange a ventilator bed for his wife has gone viral on social media.

"I was not able to get a ventilator bed for my wife. Then, how can I help you? I am completely lost and it is out of my hands," Amarnath can be heard telling a man who had called seeking help to get a ventilator bed for a critically ill patient admitted at ESI Hospital here.

My situation is such. It is out of my hands. I am ready to face action or even go home if action is taken

T Amarnath, Mysuru DHO in audio clip

Enraged by the DHO's reply, the patient's attendant questioned Amarnath why he was continuing in the position when he couldn't help people.

"My situation is such. It is out of my hands. I am ready to face action or even go home if action is taken," he can be heard saying.

The audio clip, leaked on social media platforms, reveals the helplessness of health officials who are struggling just like commoners at a time with the second wave of the pandemic has wreaked havoc in the state.